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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

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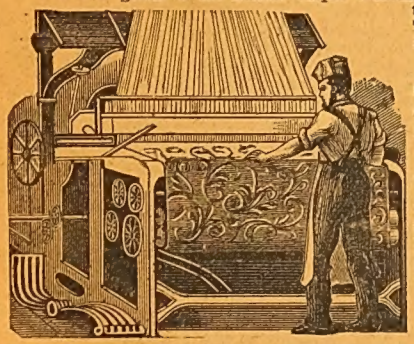

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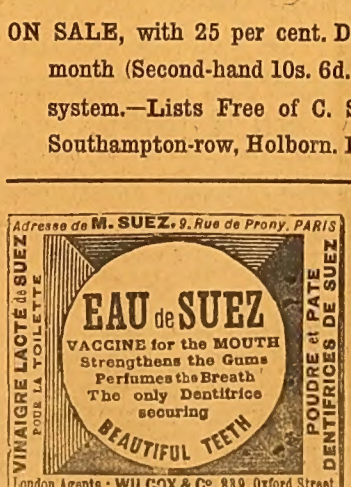
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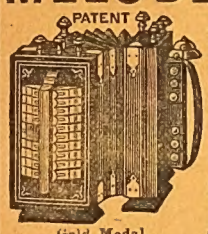

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 314.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 5, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

SHE was beautiful, and she was rich. Beyond that, nobody knew anything about her, and what was more, although the whole community was convulsed to its very foundations with curiosity and with excitement, nobody was able to find out anything about her than these two patent facts of her wealth and of her beauty.

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Where she came from, why she came, who were her belongings, what was her origin—all these things were unfathomable mysteries. Whether, indeed, she was wife, widow, or maid, was absolutely an unknown problem to the good people of Llancarthy.

She called herself Princess Petrusky; but then, as Mrs. Thomas Evans, the doctor's wife, shrewdly remarked, these foreign princes and princesses don't go for much. In fact, according to Mrs. Tom Evans and her cronies, the aristocratic name had a flavour of something that was almost disreputable about it when you come to thrust it violently in the faces of the commonplace inhabitants of the quietest of little Welsh villages.

She was splendidly, regally handsome; tall, with the figure of a goddess; golden hair that rippled crisply away from her brow; eyes that shone forth blue as the summer skies; a profile that was almost Grecian in its perfection. It was a face born to command and to rule—scarcely, perhaps, to be much loved.

Exactly opposite Hill Side, as the house which the Princess had hired, was called, there stood, lower down along the valley, an unpretentious but commodious house, belonging to a gentleman of the name of Hallett. This house, which was built of red brick, and was low and rambling, went by the name of the Beeches, and had belonged to the Halletts for some generations.

They were of good family, but were poor. Mr. Hallett, a wife, four daughters, and one son; they were a most affectionate and united family, and ever since the memory of man there was not a member of the family who had failed to marry well, to conduct himself or herself with decorum and respectability, and, in short, to lead a virtuous and godly life from their cradles to their graves.

At the time when this story begins, the Princess Petrusky had been about a month at Hill Side, and Lionel Hallett had just returned from completing his education at Oxford, where he had, of course, done remarkably well; and equally, of course, an uncle of his mother's had promised him a diplomatic appointment, into which he was expected to walk, without any further trouble, in about a month's time. That was the way with the Halletts; they all fell on their feet and turned out well and creditably, and never gave their relations cause to be anything but proud of them.

When Lionel came home the excitement about the foreign princess was at its height, and two days later a wonderful thing happened. Lionel had gone out by himself for a solitary ramble over the hills, and with him went Wolf, his collie dog, who rushed about hither and thither with joyful barkings of delight.

Presently the stillness of the summer afternoon was broken by harsh and discordant noises, as of dogs barking angrily at each other—Wolf's gruff voice bellowing forth defiance, and

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The princess herself reclined upon an ottoman in the centre of the room.

shriller yappings answering back in accents of irritated fury. Above the clamour and the din came the tones of a woman's voice, clear yet authoritative:

"Monton! Bebe!"

Lionel Hallett swung round with a curious flush upon his handsome face. A sort of instinct told him who it was.

At a little distance from him stood a lady—Princess Petrusky. She was simply clad in a close-fitting dark cloth dress, and wore a small crimson silk hat upon her bright locks. She appeared to be quite alone, and struggling vainly to induce her two poodles to relinquish the somewhat bellicose attack they had made upon Wolf, whom they evidently considered in the light of an intruder on their premises.

Wolf, on his part, albeit a good-natured creature upon the whole, was beginning to resent the pertinacity with which Monton and Bebe attacked him, one in the flank and one in the rear. His temper was evidently rising fast, and he was beginning to show his teeth to his tormentors in rather a dangerous manner. The Princess called off her dogs in vain. She seemed distressed by the situation of her pets, and fearful lest Wolf, in his superior strength, should turn round on them in downright earnest.

No sooner, however, did Lionel Hallett reach the spot than the canine battle assumed an altered appearance. He strode rapidly down the hill toward the belligerents and laid a forcible hand upon Wolf's collar.

"Come here, sir—lie down," he said to the collie, who obediently crouched beneath his hand, while with the other Lionel politely raised his hat.

"I am very much obliged to you, sir, for calling off your dog," said the Princess, in very good English; "there certainly would have been bloodshed in a few minutes! Ah, Monton and Bebe, how naughty you both are!"

She bestowed a little tap with her parasol to her two poodles, who slunk shamefacedly behind her, then she looked up at the young Welshman with a bright, winning smile.

"You are young Mr. Hallett, are you not?" she asked.

Lionel, with a look of surprise, assented.

"You wonder, I dare say, how I know that. I met you in the village two days ago—do you remember? Yours was a new face to me, so I inquired who you were."

"I feel much flattered that you should have taken the trouble to inquire about me," said Lionel, with a flush, but the Princess interrupted him laughingly:

"Oh, there is nothing in that; I like to know all about my neighbours."

"Your neighbours know very little about you, Princess."

"That is true," she replied with a smile. "Will you walk down the hill with me, Mr. Hallett? That is to say, if you think we can make our dogs keep the peace."

Lionel assented joyfully. He felt almost bewildered by the condescension and kindness of her manner towards him; how gracious she was, and how fascinating was her smile, and, above all, how beautiful she was! He felt almost too happy and elated to utter a word.

He was wondering what he should say to her, when the Princess turned to him again with that delicious smile of hers.

"You are in the diplomatic service?"

"I hope to be shortly. I have been promised an appointment," said Lionel, wondering where she got that piece of information.

"Ah! you're to be made a Queen's Messenger, and you'll be sent to St. Petersburg?" said the princess.

This time Lionel stopped short and stared at her.

"How in the world——"

The Princess laughed outright.

"I see, you think I am a magician! Well, it is wonderful how I know so much about you, is it not? Cease to look so surprised! Do not speculate about what I say to you—think only of why I take so much interest in you," she said with her rare smile.

It was like the gracious intimation which a sovereign gives to a favoured subject when she grants him permission to woo her—how else could Lionel interpret that smile, at once so confiding and so tender!

They were nearing the garden of the house where she lived. Emboldened by her words of encouragement, the young man stopped short.

"May I come and see you?" he asked eagerly.

"Assuredly you may. Come soon—to lunch to-morrow. Ah, no, not then; so many are with me then. Come later—at five o'clock. You will find me in, and alone."

"How good you are!" murmured Lionel. "Why are you so kind to me?"

"I suppose it is because I like you," she replied with a smile, holding out her hand.

It was with the action of a queen rather than of an equal that she did so, and Lionel, bewildered, dazzled, confused, scarce knowing whether he was awake or asleep, bent over the long white hand that she held out to him, and pressed it fervently to his lips.

When he looked at her there was a deep flush on her beautiful face—a flush that he could not quite make out. It was a flush of annoyance, almost of indignation—certainly not of bashfulness. She smiled again, however, upon him, and, murmuring "Good-bye," passed through the garden gate, and vanished from his sight.

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CHAPTER II.

THERE was a dim and mysterious radiance in the Princess's boudoir at Hill Side. Lace curtains, festooned across the windows, lined with soft amber-coloured muslin, kept out the too glaring light of day; tall palms and feathery ferns were grouped in rich luxuriance about the room; and in the tiny conservatory, where a fountain splashed coolly and freshly in the hot, breezeless afternoon, there were masses of thick, white blossoms, gardenias and stephanotis, which filled the atmosphere with delicious and subtle odours.

The room was furnished chiefly with low divans, and deep, slumberous looking armchairs. A few little tables, covered with feminine knicknacks, all of a costly and curious nature, were arranged among them; whilst tall mirrors from the ceiling to the floor reflected back again and again the lovely figure of the Princess herself, who reclined upon an ottoman almost in the centre of the room.

She half rose from her seat as Lionel Hallett, an evidently expected guest, was ushered in, and welcomed him only with a smile, and a mute gesture to seat himself by her side. Had the Princess Petrusky been preparing herself for the conquest of the Tsar of all the Russias himself, she could hardly have been more distractingly beautiful. Her dress was of creamy white silk, covered with rare lace, and fastened by knots of amber silk at her throat and waist.

"How glad I am that you remembered to come," she murmured.

"Do you think I could forget it, Princess Petrusky?"

"Ah! do not call me by that formal name. I have so few friends in the world—but they call me by my name. Will you not be one of them?"

She held out her lovely hand to him and he—small blame to him—took it and retained it, murmuring passionately:

"I would be more than your friend! By what name shall I call you, oh, my queen?"

"Foolish boy!" she said with a tender little smile, and gently pressing the hand that held her own. "My name is Olga Petrusky—call me Olga."

"You are not married?" he asked, with a sudden painful anxiety.

"Married!" she repeated, raising her eyebrows in surprise; "what can make you think so? Am I so old to look at, then?"

"Oh, no—no; only I feared you might; but of course you are not—that would be too horrible!" he cried

"Yes, would it not?" she murmured with a smile which, had he had the eyes to see it with, might possibly have struck him as peculiar.

But he had no eyes to see anything save her beauty. Every moment he was falling more deeply in love with her; his heart, and at the same time his vanity, was becoming more deeply impressed by her evident liking for him and the strangely marked encouragement she gave to his advances.

What could it be, Lionel asked himself, with a mingling of surprise and almost of delirious delight, that made this regal beauty stoop to such dangerous tenderness toward himself? Flattering—almost too flattering—as the idea was, there could be but one deduction to be drawn from her manner to him. The Princess Olga Petrusky had seen something in him which other women had failed to perceive, and had fallen desperately in love with him at first sight. For more than an hour he remained in that enchanted boudoir, their conversation becoming at last mere broken words, and, on his side, half-smothered sighs.

At length she gave the signal for him to go by rising from her chair.

"And the appointment—has not come yet?" she asked, as he reluctantly prepared to take his leave.

"Not yet; but I do not want it—— now!" he said meaningly.

"Ah! you will be glad enough when it comes. Let me be the prophet of your fortunes. It will come to-morrow morning—you will hear that you are to be a Queen's Messenger. By the way," she added, changing the subject, and looking full into the young man's flushed face, "is it that you are short, or that I am tall? see how nearly of a height we are?"

She pointed to one of the long mirrors; and, in fact, there was but a trifling difference between them.

"You are 'as high as my heart,'" quoted Lionel sentimentally.

"We are not unlike either," continued the Princess playfully, still looking into the glass. "See, your hair is as fair as mine, and curls, and your eyes are blue; your skin is almost as pink and white. We might be brother and sister."

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated Lionel fervently. "Do not flatter me too much—you are beautiful as a goddess, while I am only a very ordinary mortal!"

"Still, we are not unlike," persisted the Princess; "and now you must go. Remember me at post time to-morrow, and come and see me again if I turn out to be a true prophetess."

Sure enough, the next morning, at breakfast, there lay a large official document by Lionel's plate. He was appointed a Queen's Messenger, and was ordered to be in readiness to start for St. Petersburg in a week's time; he was to be in town and call at the Foreign Office for his orders and for his despatches before he started.

There was general rejoicing in the Hallett family at this news.

"Lord A—— has been as good as his word. You really are a lucky fellow, Lionel!" said his father gleefully.

And then his mother and sisters kissed him and made much of him. And Lionel was alone depressed and unhappy. To go to St. Petersburg in a week meant to him that he must leave his beautiful Princess Olga. The thought filled him with utter despair.

As soon as he could shake himself free from the affectionate congratulations of his family, he took his hat and went out, bending his steps towards the house among the hills.

The Princess was at home. Again he found her alone in the magic boudoir, and this time she was attired in a simple white muslin dress, in which she looked as innocent as any English maiden.

"Did I not tell you the truth?" she cried gaily to him as he entered. "You have got your appointment?"

"Alas! yes," replied this ungrateful young man, with a groan.

"Come, come! Why are you sighing over it? Surely you are a lucky man!"

"Lucky, when

She pointed one of the long mirrors.

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"Good-bye, my dear boy."

I shall leave what I love in less than a week! To-day is already Tuesday, and Sunday night I shall have to go up to town, and leave you!"

"Is that so terrible a grief?" she asked softly.

And then she turned away and gathered a blossom from the white stephanotis that garlanded the shining walls of the little conservatory.

He made no answer. It seemed to him that in leaving her he was indeed leaving all that he loved on earth.

"But you will get over it, will you not?" she said presently, turning her bright face towards him once more, with an alluring softness in her lovely eyes.

And then Lionel Hallett lost his head and his self-control. He caught the hand that held the stephanotis flower to his heart, and covered it with kisses. He knelt at her feet—he poured forth incoherent vows of love and admiration, mingled with self-accusations concerning his own presumption and folly—he intreated her to forgive him, to permit him at least to bask in her presence, since he dared not to hope anything further from her—to allow him for this one short week to be her slave, her worshipper, and then to let him go a maimed and wounded thing for ever, banished by the hand of fate from her presence.

Then she began to question him—strangely and oddly, had he had the sense to perceive it, only his infatuation blinded him.

Did Lord A—— know him? No, he had never seen him. He was only a great friend of his father's. Was he to go to the Foreign Office himself? Would they give him a passport? Oh, yes; of course they would do that. How would they describe him—fair, curly hair, blue eyes, pink and white skin? And then she glanced again at the mirror in which their two images were reflected, and smiled.

"They won't make any mention of your moustache, Lionel—it is too small," she laughingly remarked.

Then she pinned the stephanotis blossom on his coat with her own fair hands, and sent him away half delirious with joy, telling him to come again to-morrow.

Day after day this poor deluded youth returned, like the moth to the candle, to the presence of his beautiful syren; day after day their interviews became more prolonged, more dangerously sweet. Only once would Olga Petrusky permit him to kiss her face.

He exhausted himself in kissing her hands, her rounded wrists, the flowers she gave him; but no sweeter caress was vouchsafed to him. Only, as the week wore away, Princess Olga seemed to grow sad as the time for his departure drew near. Often she sighed and was silent when he spoke, or let her eyes rest with melancholy regret upon his face, or her voice quivered when she spoke of what she would do when he was gone. What wonder, then, that Lionel began to believe in very truth that she loved him in return?

At last the Saturday—the last day of this enchanted week—came round. Olga and Lionel were walking in the garden among the bright beds of scarlet geraniums, and backwards and forwards across the smooth-shaven lawn.

All at once Lionel burst forth impetuously:

"To-morrow I shall have to leave you. All this happiness will be over—I shall have only the hollow, empty dream to look back upon. Every mile that I travel will carry me further from you—every moment will separate me more completely from the woman I love so devotedly."

Olga smiled.

"My dear boy, I think you are talking very foolishly," she said gently.

"What do you mean?" he asked quickly.

She stopped, laid her hand on his arm, and looked full into his eyes.

"Lionel," she said, "am I not rich and independent and wilful? Do you think there is anything on earth that I could not do if I wished? Could anybody stop me?"

"No, I suppose not."

"Well, then, foolish boy, why do you talk as if I were fixed and fastened, and rooted for ever in your dull Llancarthy? If I chose, could I not leave it, too?"

He caught her hands. He trembled and his heart beat tumultuously.

"What do you mean?" he asked again, breathlessly.

"That—I might come with you, Lionel," she answered softly.

"Olga, my queen, my goddess! Can you mean it? Will you marry me? Ah, do not deceive me—do not be so cruel as to play upon my feelings! Can you mean it?"

She looked at him and smiled again.

"Why not?" she asked, tapping his cheek with the flower she held.

And then for the space of five minutes she was forced to be silent, in order to listen to his rhapsodies over her goodness and her beauty, and the love, absolutely unparalleled in the history of the world, which he felt towards her.

When his eloquence had nearly spent itself for lack of breath, she spoke again, seriously and gravely:

"I will marry you under certain conditions, to which you must agree. Hush! Do not make any protestations; of course, you will agree to them. Now, listen to me. I do not wish you to give up your career in life for me. I should despise a husband who had no profession.

"You will go up to town on Sunday night, and I will go with you. You will deposit me at the hotel; and the first thing you will do on Monday morning will be to present yourself at the Foreign Office and get your despatches for St. Petersburg, and your passport. After that you will go to Doctors' Commons and get a marriage licence. We will be married quietly on Tuesday morning, and we will start for the Continent immediately afterwards. Will you do this?"

Needless to say that Lionel fell into the trap; he assented to every detail that she had proposed. He never thought of his parents, or what they would say to him, nor of the new career which was just opening out to him; nor did it even occur to him to make inquiries concerning this bride whom he had wooed and won so easily. He did not ask her a single question concerning her parentage, or her relations; he only looked at her beautiful face and felt that she was perfect and complete in her own wonderful self, and that he was the happiest man on earth.

CHAPTER III.

"GOOD-BYE, my dear boy, take care of yourself, and do us credit," said old Mr. Hallett, wringing his son's hand.

The whole family was assembled upon the platform to see the hopeful son depart on his journey; and amidst all the kisses and tears and hand-shakings, Lionel himself was distracted and absent-minded. He only paid a half attention to all these parting injunctions; his eyes were wandering restlessly all about the station in search of a tall figure which certainly was not there.

At last, just as the train came up, he caught sight of her, closely veiled and wrapped in a long cloak, followed by a maid

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bearing her wraps, and by a man bearing her dressing bag, and preceded by a porter laden with her luggage.

Lionel was slightly disconcerted by the sight of the man and maid; only for a moment, though, for he told himself instantly that a Princess could not be expected to make even a runaway marriage in the same fashion as would any ordinary mortal; still, he would, undoubtedly, rather have had his Olga to himself on this occasion.

As soon as he caught sight of her, he made a half step forward, as if to join her; but, by a scarcely perceptible movement of her hand, she waved him back, and got into a carriage in the front part of the train; and Lionel, in full view of his affectionate and respectable family, had the good sense to take the hint, and refrain from following her. He took his place in another carriage, and the train moved off.

At the first station, however, he changed carriages, and joined his Princess. But there, to his great disgust, was the maid in the farther corner! And a man may be in love as much as he likes, but to make love to the mistress under the very eyes of her maid is a thing which is not feasible even to the most devoted of lovers.

For the first time he experienced a distinct sense of annoyance with his divinity.

"You might have sent her to another carriage," he whispered, reproachfully.

"I thought it so much wiser, dear boy. Why should we create a scandal? I wish to keep my name pure and unsullied for your sake."

Of course, this was a delicate form of flattery, and Lionel was appeased. He looked unutterable things at her, and forgave her.

When they reached London, the Princess Olga expressed a desire to go to the Langham Hotel. Lionel, therefore, summoned a cab, and placed her and her servant and belongings in it.

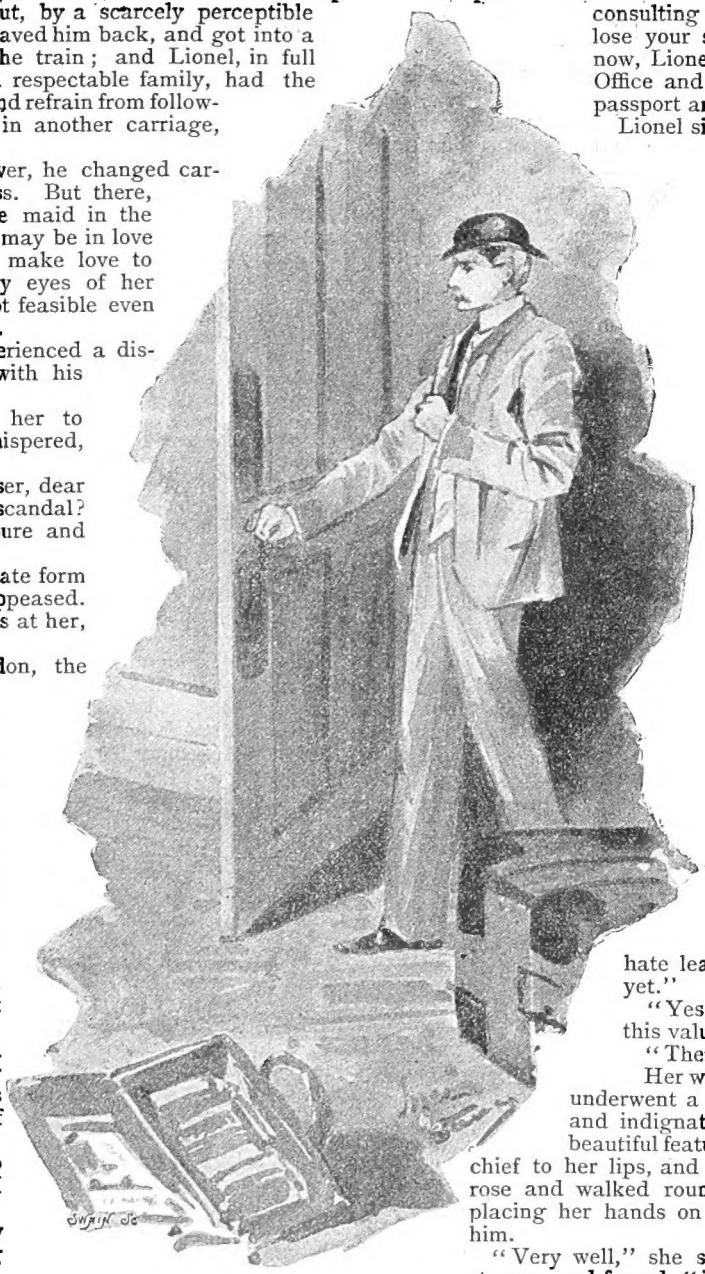
"You will come to the Langham Hotel, too, will you not?" she whispered, bending forward out of the cab window.

"Don't you think I had better go to another hotel?" observed Lionel, to whom this appeared an imprudent measure.

She looked at him with a world of reproach in her lovely eyes, and clasped her hands with a little tragic gesture of despair.

"Ah! do you desert me so soon? Think how lonely I shall be—how miserable!"

"Do you care so very much, then?" said the young man under his breath, looking at her with his soul in his eyes.



He went to his own room.

"Care! Oh, Lionel! There, I know you will be a dear, good boy, and do as I wish. Come, put your things in another cab, and follow me to the Langham."

In little more than an hour, they were comfortably housed in the Langham, and a substantial breakfast, laid out in the Princess's private sitting-room, was refreshing the runaway lovers after the fatigues and perils of the past night's journey.

How happy was Lionel Hallett at the breakfast! In after years, he often looked back to it with a strange pang of regret and pain. Olga was more charming and affectionate to him than she had ever been before. She waited upon him, pouring out his coffee, and helping him to toast. Frequently she rose from the table, and, coming round behind his chair, laid her hand playfully and lovingly on his shoulder, while she pressed him to eat what she brought him. It was past twelve o'clock before the delicious *tête-à-tête* was over.

"Now pleasure ends and duty begins," said the Princess, consulting her watch. "Sorry as I am to lose your society, I must send you away now, Lionel. You must go to the Foreign Office and see Lord A——, and get your passport and your despatches."

Lionel sighed heavily.

"I suppose I must," he said gloomily; "but, oh, how I hate going away! What shall you do, my Olga?"

"I will wait here for you," she said, smiling; "so that I can take charge of the despatch box when you come back. For you will have to go away again, you know, Lionel—to the city—on our business this time."

"To get our marriage licence? Ah! yes; I have not forgotten that! Why should I not get it first, and go to the Foreign Office later?"

"No, no; I cannot let you do that! You must go to the Foreign Office first, and then you must bring the papers here to me! You must not dream of going on to the city with such valuable things about you; fancy if you were to lose them! Your whole future career would be ruined! Promise me, Lionel, that you will bring them straight back here! Besides, I shall see you again sooner—I shall not be so long without you!"

"My angel!" he cried, rapturously. "Oh, how I hate leaving you—I really cannot go yet."

"Yes, you must go; do not waste this valuable time, dearest!"

"Then give me a kiss before I go!"

Her whole face, for one swift moment, underwent a change; an expression of rage and indignation flashed quickly across her beautiful features, but she raised her handkerchief to her lips, and he did not see it. Then she rose and walked round the table behind him, and, placing her hands on his shoulders, bent down over him.

"Very well," she said, and her voice was rather strange and forced, "if you will go at once I will kiss you."

Then she just touched his forehead with her lips. Fortunately for him there was no tell-tale mirror opposite to him, wherein he could have seen reflected the white, angry face of the woman who gave him what he deemed her first kiss of love.

After that, beside himself with happiness and delight, he left her, and took himself off to his interview with Lord A——.

Princess Petrusky waited for him with a patience that was truly admirable.

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She sat just where he had left her, at the round table in the middle of the room, facing the clock, upon which her eyes were fixed with an anxiety that was almost painful. The waiter came and cleared the breakfast things away from before her, but still Princess Olga sat there, motionless, staring at the clock.

Sometimes a shiver passed over her; once she trembled from head to foot and a few words escaped her pale lips.

"Suppose he should not return—suppose he should suspect—but no, it is impossible, I have deceived him too well. Patience and courage! he will be back soon!"

He came at last.

As he opened the door the colour rushed in a flood to her face. She sprang to her feet, and certainly no truly loving woman ever greeted a man's return with a greater joy shining in her face than did the Princess Olga as Lionel Hallett came into the room with his box of despatches in his hand.

She was full of delight at his return and of eager questionings.

What had Lord A—— said to him? What had he told him to do? Had he received all his instructions? And, above all, had he obtained the passport?

Yes, it was there safe enough.

"But you!" said Lionel, with a sudden thought. "How can you travel without one? I ought to have got one for you too."

Olga laughed.

"Oh, women don't need passports nowadays; besides, I am going to my own country, you know. I shall not even be asked for such a thing."

Lionel believed her, and said no more.

"Now, you dear boy, you must go to the city, and I will order a charming little dinner, which we will eat together. Then you shall take me to the theatre this evening."

As soon as the door was shut behind him, the Princess jumped up and rang the bell.

Her maid entered hurriedly.

"Is all in readiness, Catherine?"

"Yes, my lady."

"Then make haste, for we have not a moment to spare."

Two hours later, Lionel Hallett ran lightly up the hotel steps on his return from Doctors' Commons with his marriage licence in his pocket, and found the Princess's sitting-room empty.

"Where is the Princess Petrusky?" he asked the waiter.

The man looked at him in surprise.

"The lady has left, sir."

"Has gone out, I suppose you mean?" said Lionel, still unsuspicious.

"No, sir, she has left altogether, with her lady's maid and man servant. She sent for her bill directly you left, and her luggage was taken downstairs. Did you not know it, sir? Do you feel ill, sir?"

Lionel had staggered back against the wall, white and weak.

"It is impossible!" he gasped at length. "You must be dreaming! She cannot have gone! I will not believe it!"

But he had to believe it. Her rooms were empty—cleared of every single thing that had belonged to her. Not a trace of her was left.

In his despair, he went to his own room. That was all in disorder. His portmanteau was unlocked, his things were strewn about the floor; and, more singular still, one whole suit of clothes, and a long travelling ulster he had just purchased, together with a new "pot" hat, were altogether missing! On the table lay the despatch box—empty! By the box was a note addressed to him. He tore it open and read as follows:

"DEAR MR. HALLETT,—I have stolen a whole suit of your clothes! Will you ever forgive me? I think they will fit me charmingly! You know we are not unlike. I venture to think your passport also will be of some use to me. You will not, I am sure, grudge me the use of it when I tell you that my husband is in St. Petersburg, and that I, being a Pole, am for some trifling political offence an exile from Russia; but now, thanks to you, I am able to join him. Forgive me for having made you believe other things, and hope for what I could not give you.

"Your friend,

"OLGA PETRUSKY."

* * * * *

There was a scandal in high quarters, and Mr. Hallett senior had a great many startling revelations made to him concerning his hopeful son. But, thanks to Lord A——'s influence, matters were eventually hushed up; and within a year Lionel gratefully accepted a humble clerkship in one of the public offices. Very certainly, after the episode of the romantic and successful flight of the Princess Petrusky into Russia, no one ever again proposed to make Lionel Hallett a Queen's Messenger!

"O, I can't go to sleep with one in the room. And yet a clock once saved my life—after it had made me nearly lose it"

As he spoke, Lieut. Halford lifted a dainty little timepiece from its position in the centre of the mantel, and carried it off to the cupboard, where he deposited it very carefully on one of the shelves.

"Nonsense, Frank!" rejoined his friend, Grant Young. "You're the last man I would ever accuse of being fussy."

"Not having heard my clock story, you are, of course, ignorant of the fact that I was once tried for murder."

"Look here, Frank, don't trifle with a fellow's nerves on a night like this."

Then, seeing that his friend's face was deeply serious, Young added, "Go on, then."

"It was shortly before I joined the army and when I was out in America prospecting with a party from Denver, Arizona. We had struck a good thing near the little town with the most inappropriate name of Bluebell. It was a newly-settled place, and settled with some pretty poor material too. A vein of silver had been struck in the hill close by, and the town sprang up like a skyrocket. The vein proved a very short one, and Bluebell's soaring soon came down like a stick, and now I doubt if there are a dozen families left there.

"At the time of which I speak, however, Bluebell was a city of considerable pretensions—for its kind. It boasted a hotel with two rooms, a shaving saloon with a regular barber's chair, and a small tailoring establishment, as the sign had it, which we fellows of the Baby Mine found a great improvement on amateur darns and button fastenings.

"This tailor shop was kept by a German named Bilsing, one of the most repulsive-looking men I have ever seen.

One afternoon I had gone to his place to have a rent in my coat lining sewed up. While he was at work on it, I asked him how much it would be, and on his answering, took the money from my pocket and laid it on the table in front of him. When the job was finished I put on my coat and was about to hurry off when Bilsing called after me: 'Say, you go off mitout leaving me somedings. It cost denpence."

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"'I paid you once,' I retorted.

"'No, you did not,' he insisted, and then, rather than have a fuss with the man, I paid him over again, and took occasion at the same time to tell him plainly that I knew he was cheating me.

"Jack Darling and Nate Gray, two miners from Bluebell, happened to drop in while Bilsing and I were in the thick of it, for the impudent fellow answered back, and I considered myself lucky to get out of the place without having to resort to my muscles to defend myself. As I walked back to our claim I vowed never to go to the shop again; you can imagine, then, how annoyed I was when I discovered that I had lost a locket from my watch-chain.

"It contained the picture of my mother, which I prized most highly. I had noticed that the ring by which it had been attached to my chain was wearing perilously thin, and had determined to file it through, take the locket off, and put it away safely till I had an opportunity of having it fastened on by a jeweller. But I had delayed to do this, and now the thing was gone.

"Could I have lost it at Bilsing's shop? I asked myself. I remembered that I had been leaning against the worktable, the edge of which would come just about where the locket had been. I resolved to return at once and make a search, deeply as I disliked the idea of interviewing the man again.

"I turned and retraced my steps, walking slowly, with my eyes on the ground. But I saw no sign of my locket on the way. Just before I reached Bilsing's place I looked at my watch to see how much time I had before supper, and saw that it was twenty minutes to six.

"The irascible German was seated cross-legged on his table, busily at work, when I entered.

"'Vell, vat you vant now?' he grunted out when he saw me.

"'I think I dropped a locket on the floor here,' I answered, and began to search among the litter under the table. 'You didn't see it, did you?' I added, when a three minutes' hunt proved barren of results.

"'You dink I steal him, eh?' he snarled, dropping his work, and beginning to glare at me.

"'No; I didn't say so!' I returned. I might have added that I thought so, but he scarcely gave me time to do any thinking, for all at once he burst out with a torrent of brutal invective.

"He sprang down from the table, and I thought he was going to strike me. I squared off and made ready to defend myself, and at that instant the door opened and a man entered the shop. He was quite a young fellow and had a pair of trousers over his arm, which he flung down on the counter, raging something in German, and then got out as quickly as possible.

"Bilsing's attention was momentarily diverted from me by this episode, and I seized the opportunity to take myself off, satisfied that I could get nothing out of the man in his present mood.

"'Perhaps I did not lose the locket there, after all,' I reflected, and spent twice the usual amount of time it took me to reach our camp by making a thorough inspection of the path. But I did not find the locket. I said nothing to the fellows about my afternoon's experience, but quietly made up my mind to make another visit to the tailoring establishment later on, in the hope that I might find its owner in a more reasonable frame of mind.

"The next morning we had heard that Bilsing was dead, and before noon I was charged with having murdered him. He had been found in a heap on the floor of his shop by John Draper, who had stepped in to order a pair of trousers at twenty minutes past six. He had a bruise on the side of his head, and my locket was found by his side.

"An investigation was made by a committee of citizens—there was no law to speak of in Bluebell. Darling and Gray were very reluctantly obliged to testify that they had seen me quarrelling with him that very afternoon, and, to crown all, they had unearthed that fellow who had rushed in with a pair of trousers to be repaired, who turned out to be one Hermann Olgreich, and who swore that he had seen me standing up before Bilsing in a threatening attitude at a quarter-past six.

"'But I had left the shop a good half-hour before that,' I insisted, when I heard this. 'I remember that fellow coming in, and I am sure that it couldn't have been more than ten minutes to six at the very latest.'

"But even as I spoke I remembered with a shudder that I would find it difficult to prove my assertion, for on account of my search by the way for the locket, I had taken, as I have said, twice the usual length of time to get back to our camp, so that the testimony of my mates there as to the time of my arrival would avail me nothing. Jack Dingman, my chum, did all that mortal man could do, and the rest of the fellows in our claim scoured Bluebell in search of witnesses who might be able to prove that I was not in Bilsing's shop at a quarter-past six. But it was no use. The only thing gained by it was the discovery of a trampish fellow who said he had stepped in at the tailor's establishment about six o'clock to get a light for his pipe and found Bilsing alone, and apparently all right.

"'Now if you could only prove that that Olgreich fellow is wrong, and that you are right about the time of your being with Bilsing, we could get you clear in a jiffy,' Jack assured me.

"There was no gaol in the place, of course, so I was detained in a well-guarded room at the hotel. My friends were allowed to come in and see me at intervals, but, as you can imagine, these interviews were anything but cheerful ones.

"At last the day of the so-called formal trial came, and all my worst fears were realised as the case progressed. All the little flaws I had picked in the array of evidence against me, and charged the boys to bring up when the time came, were outweighed by the preponderating evidence on the other side. Suddenly Jack Dingman sprang to his feet, and I imagined he had thought of a new line of evidence. He said nothing, however, but hurried out of the room, carrying my last shred of hope with him.

"'He can't bear to stay and hear me convicted,' I told myself.

"But I was wrong. In five minutes Jack was back again, out of breath, but with a look in his eyes that set my heart throbbing.

"'Will you please call Hermann Olgreich back to the witness-box?' he said to the man who was acting the part of judge.

"Amid a good deal of wonderment about what might be coming, Jack turned to the German youth and asked:

"'How did you know that it was a quarter-past six when you saw the prisoner in Bilsing's shop? You have no watch, I believe.'

"'I looked at the clock,' was the reply.

"'What is Jack driving at?' I asked myself. 'Surely this has all been gone over before.'

"'Where were you standing when you looked at the clock?'

"'In the doorway. It was just as I was going in,' replied Olgreich.

"Jack brought his hands together with a smack. 'That settles it, I believe,' he exclaimed. 'But there is just one more question I should like to ask, How could you tell the time if you got no farther than the doorway, because the clock at Bilsing's is over it, on the inside?'

"'Why, sure enough,' answered the unsuspecting witness promptly. 'There is a looking-glass behind Bilsing's table, and I saw the clock reflected there.'

"'Which turned the hands round and made it seem to you a quarter-past six, when it was really a quarter-before six!' and Jack rushed towards me with hand outstretched.

"It was as if a bombshell had burst in that improvised courtroom. There was a complete revulsion of public sentiment in my favour, and it scarcely needed the testimony of the trampish individual who wanted a light for his pipe to clear me.

"Suspicion now being turned back upon itself, so to speak, a doctor was procured, and an autopsy held on the dead man, which established the fact that he had died of an apoplectic stroke.

"And now do you wonder, Grant, that I am a little sensitive to the ticking of a clock, even though, as I said, one did save my life?"

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," etc.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

Franz Hartog—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

Sir Harry Milton—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, in his yacht, the *Calypso*, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

Herbert Wyndham—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

Frederick Austen—the inventor of the air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

Frank Markham—the young captain of the Utopian yacht, *Mermaid*.

Violet Milton—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is fearfully injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

Lea Cassilis (alias Mme. Dail)—a member of Autonomie Group No. 7 with whom Renault is in Love.

Dora Merton—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

Lucy Summers—another fair Utopian.

Renault, after levying blackmail with Hartog on the high seas, returns to Utopia with the object of destroying the colony, but finds it deserted. After a time he goes to Europe in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and, together with Lea Cassilis, visits the Criterion Theatre in London, where he is recognised by Sir Harry and Lieutenant Wyndham, who effect his capture. He is tried, and condemned to death, but is rescued on his way to the scaffold by his confederates in the air-ship.

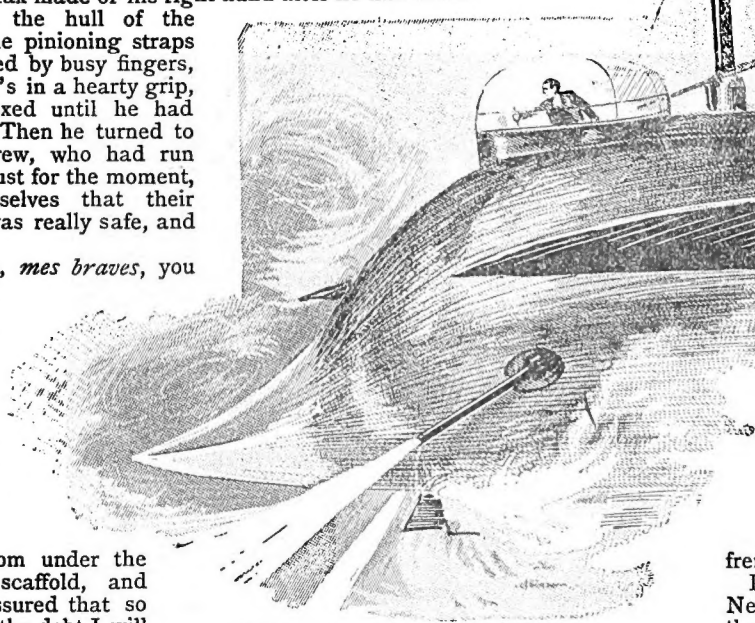
CHAPTER XXXIII.

Revenge!

"Bravo, Raoul, that was the neatest thing you ever did in your life, *mon brave*, and you'll live to be pretty old before you do anything smarter! *Tonnerre!* How that canaille yelled when they saw me go up instead of the black flag. I can be as good a friend as I can an enemy, and you shall never want a friend now as long as I'm alive."

The first use Max made of his right hand after he had been hauled up into the hull of the *Vengeur* and the pinioning straps had been removed by busy fingers, was to take Taxil's in a hearty grip, which never relaxed until he had done speaking. Then he turned to the air-ship's crew, who had run into the saloon just for the moment, to satisfy themselves that their rescued leader was really safe, and said heartily:

"And you too, *mes braves*, you have done splendidly! Henceforth you and I will not only be captain and crew of the *Vengeur*. We shall be comrades and friends. I owe you my life, for you have snatched me from under the shadow of the scaffold, and you can rest assured that so far as I can pay the debt I will pay it. We will have a feast together to-night to celebrate such a rescue as never was made on earth before, but just now we have some other amusement on hand, so be off to your posts and let us show the canaille down yonder that what we threaten we can do."



"*Ready with the forward guns. . . . Let go!*"

Max, like all born leaders of men, knew when to surround himself with reserve and when to unbend into cordiality. His simple speech went straight to the hearts of his men, who from that moment forward were his, body and soul, for now they looked upon him as their own in another sense than that of command.

By their skill and boldness, they had saved his life and snatched him from the shameful death of a felon; so he was theirs and they were his, and they left the saloon with cries of "*Vive l'Anarchie! Vive Monsieur Max!* Death to the bourgeois canaille!"—words of terrible import to the panic-stricken throngs below them.

Max, after swallowing a half bottle of champagne in a couple of gulps, asked Taxil for a cigar, and, when he had lit it, went to take his old place in the conning-tower, to direct the work of revenge, while Taxil went to see that the men were at their guns, and then betook himself to the engine-room to await orders.

The scene over which the *Vengeur* floated was even now terrible enough to have shaken the nerves of any but an Anarchist or a professional soldier. The vast throngs packed into the streets about Newgate were swaying too and fro in great masses, struggling to force their way out, and, after the manner of crowds possessed by panic, doing everything to frustrate their own object. Everyone wanted to get out of the streets at once, and the result was that hundreds were flung down and trampled under foot.

The crowd that surged out of the Old Bailey was forced back by the throng that was pressing down Ludgate Hill, while at the bottom of the hill under the railway arch a mass of vehicles, omnibuses, cabs, private carriages and tradesmen's carts, which had been waiting for the street to clear, so that they could drive through, formed a barrier against which the crowd blindly dashed itself.

Horses took fright and reared up on their hind legs, lashing out at the crowd with their fore hoofs. Cabs and light carts were overturned, jamming the larger vehicles, whose horses, utterly beyond control, made frantic efforts to clear themselves from the press and against all the maddened throng was hurling itself in a sea of frenzied humanity.

In St. Paul's Churchyard, Cheapside, Newgate Street, and Holborn, almost the same thing was happening. Streams of traffic, converging from half-a-dozen quarters of the Metropolis, all met at the junction of the great arteries, and the streets which were almost congested under ordinary circumstances, and with the most careful management, were now impassable. The police had made heroic efforts to restore something like order, and to get at least a

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portion of the crowd out of the narrow ways. But they were thrown aside and tossed about by the screaming, struggling throngs, until the universal panic attacked them too and they joined, almost involuntarily, in the general but hopeless struggle for release.

For fully ten minutes the *Vengeur* circled slowly round over the agonised thousands, as though her captain and crew were enjoying in anticipation the horrors that they were about to add to the frightful scene beneath them. Then Max stopped her a couple of hundred feet over the cross of St. Paul's, with her bow pointing westward, and called down one of the tubes:

"Ready with the forward guns—one on the end and one on the middle of the street. Let go!"

There was a sharp hissing sound as the pent-up air in the breech-chambers forced the projectiles out. Then two bright masses of flame blazed out, followed by the mingled roar of the explosions and the crash of glass as the neighbouring shop windows were blown in.

Two great ragged gaps were torn in the densely packed masses amidst which the shells fell as though the earth had burst open beneath their feet, and bodies of men and women were hurled up into the air, mingled with limbs and torn fragments of other bodies, and fell back upon the heads of those who thronged the pavements. Then, in the midst of such a cry of agony and terror as had never reached human ears before, Max took up another tube, and said:

"Ready with the port stern gun! Send a shell into that lot where the four streets meet!"

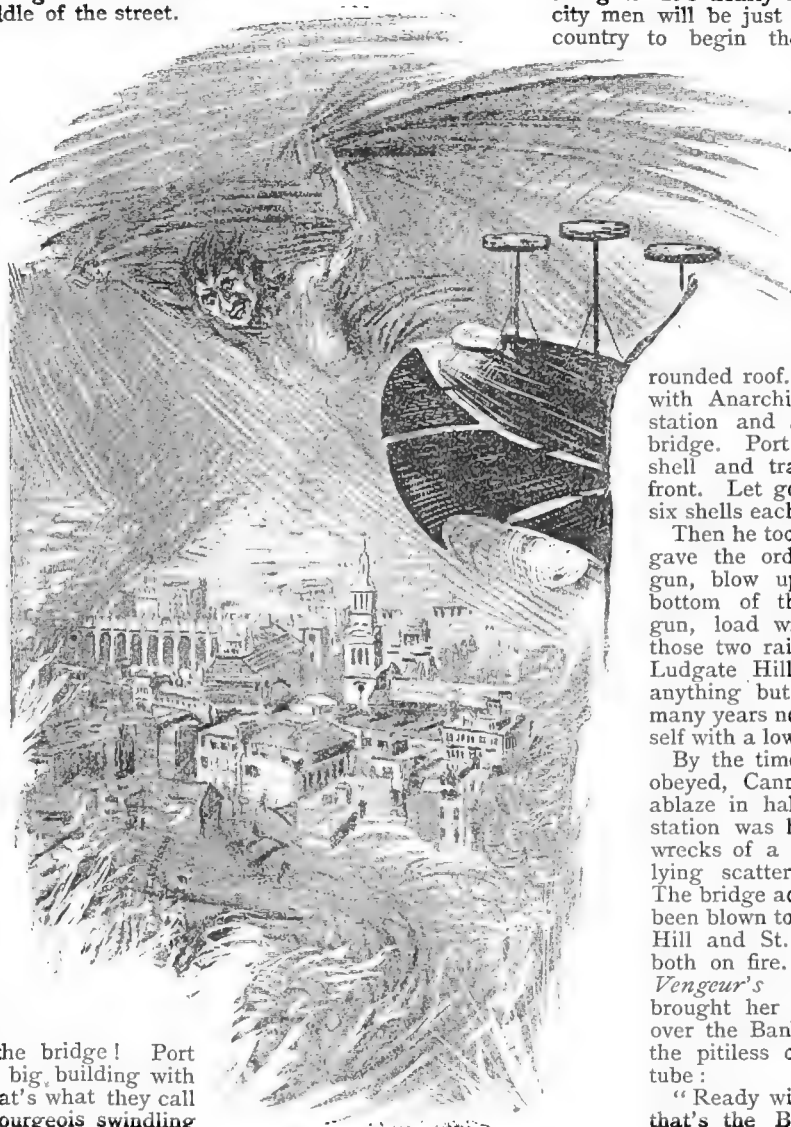
Again the hissing sound came and the shell burst in the midst of the throng that was packed into the junction of Cheapside and Newgate Street with the same hideous effects.

"Starboard bow gun—a couple of shells in the crowd by the church there. Port bow, another under the bridge! Port stern, send a shell at that big building with the pillars in front of it—that's what they call their Royal Exchange—a bourgeois swindling den!"

His orders were obeyed almost as soon as they were given, and, as each shell struck and burst, the scene of wholesale murder became more and more hideous, for the fearful effects of the projectiles seemed to strike the helpless throngs with paralysis, and all they could do was to sway to and fro and scream and moan with terror as though they intuitively knew that they were at the mercy of an enemy from whom there was no escape.

Some made wild rushes into the shops and houses, and as soon as he saw this Max ordered the guns to play upon them loaded with fire-shell, and a few minutes later unquenchable fires were blazing furiously in a score of houses and shops all round the area of slaughter and destruction. Then, like the incarnation of an evil spirit brooding above the scene of indescribable horror, the *Vengeur* passed slowly over the streets, dropping bombs charged with fire-mixture as she went, and when she had completed the circuit a ring of flame and smoke encircled the black frowning walls of the prison in which everyone had believed by this time Max Renault would have been hanging by the neck.

"I think that will do for this part of London," he said to himself, as the *Vengeur* once more floated over the Cross of St. Paul's, "and as we have a good many visits to pay to-day, we may as well be off. Ah, yes! that's a happy thought. It's nearly nine o'clock, and the city men will be just coming up from the country to begin their day's swindling. We'll smash up the railway stations first, and begin with Cannon Street. I've owed the South-Eastern a personal grudge for some time."



Like the incarnation of an evil spirit . . . the "Vengeur" passed slowly over the streets.

He took up the mouth-piece of a tube and called into it:

"Stern guns there, train on that railway station with the rounded roof. Starboard gun, load with Anarchite and fire into the station and at the trains on the bridge. Port gun, load with fire-shell and train on the hotel in front. Let go when you're ready—six shells each."

Then he took up another tube and gave the order: "Starboard bow gun, blow up that bridge at the bottom of the street. Port bow gun, load with fire-shell and set those two railway stations on fire. Ludgate Hill hasn't been fit for anything but burning for a good many years now," he added to himself with a low malicious laugh.

By the time his orders had been obeyed, Cannon Street Hotel was ablaze in half-a-dozen places, the station was half wrecked and the wrecks of a couple of trains were lying scattered over the bridge. The bridge across Ludgate Hill had been blown to pieces, and Ludgate Hill and St. Paul's stations were both on fire. He now turned the *Vengeur's* prow eastward and brought her to a standstill again over the Bank of England. Then the pitiless order went down the tube:

"Ready with the bomb tubes!—that's the Bank of England. I don't think they'll do much business to-day. Let go half-a-dozen pills for the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street to digest, if she can. Ah, that's a sort of run on the Bank they haven't had since the Old Lady started in business! Money will be a trifle tight to-day, I fancy, in the City."

He kept the *Vengeur* moving very slowly as the bombs were dropped, so that they might fall in different places. As they crashed down through the roof and burst, jets of flame and smoke rose through the holes they made, showing how terribly they had done their work, and in a few minutes the interior of the treasure-house of England was blazing like a furnace.

After this came the turn of the General Post Office and soon

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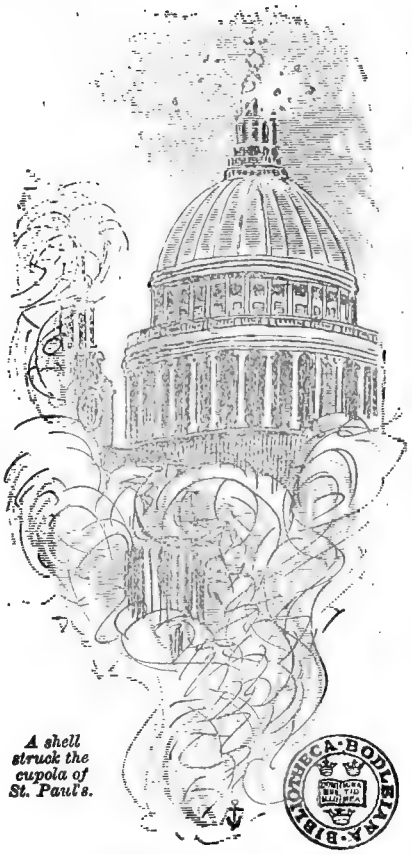

A shell struck the cupola of St. Paul's.

the bombs were crashing through the roofs of the great buildings in St. Martin's-le-Grand, setting floor after floor on fire as they burst and scattered their fearful contents through the rooms and passages. Then a shell struck the cupola of St Paul's and wrecked it at a blow. The great golden cross tottered for a moment and then crashed downwards, smashing a great hole in the dome, and shivering to fragments on the marble pavement of the cathedral.

Meanwhile, the indescribable horrors of the scene in the streets and the buildings about them were multiplying a hundredfold as shell after shell and bomb after bomb found its mark, and building after building burst into a blaze. At first the fire-engines from the surrounding districts came pouring in from all sides to do battle with the flames, but the moment that they got into action a shell exploded on them or under them, burst their boilers and reduced them to wrecks strewn with the mangled remains of the brave fellows who had come, heedless of danger, to do their duty.

By ten o'clock a dense pall of smoke overspread the whole surroundings of Newgate for half a mile on every side. The under surface of it was lighted up by the flames that rolled upwards from more than a hundred burning buildings and high above it floated the *Vengeur*, her captain and crew laughing in fiendish delight at the frightful ruin and destruction that they had achieved in so short a time.

All over London business was suspended and panic reigned supreme. The very heart and financial centre of the great city was already paralysed. The Bank of England was vomiting forth flames like a volcano, the Royal Exchange and the Stock Exchange were half ruined, and three of the most important city stations were wrecked and in flames.

The military authorities, taken wholly unawares, had, of course, made no preparations to cope with an attack which the War Office had pronounced beforehand to be impossible. But as soon as it became a dreadful reality, batteries of field pieces and machine-guns were hurriedly mounted on the roofs of Buckingham Palace, the National Gallery, the Tower, and three or four other buildings, that afforded standing room for the guns, and presently Max, seeing a shell burst in the air, a couple of hundred yards away from him, awoke to the fact that London was about to make an effort in its own defence.

"You're wasting your powder, Messieurs!" he laughed to himself as he gave the signal for the air-ship to rise a thousand feet. "That sort of thing is no good; but if you want a little artillery practice you can have it and welcome."

The *Vengeur* soared upwards and then took a short flight westward. Over the West End the clouds were much thinner and broken in places into patches between which he could see the long rows of mansions and the public buildings of Kensington.

"I don't see why we should confer all our favours on the City," he said to himself as he looked down and caught a glimpse of the Albert Memorial through the clouds. "I think we might just try the effect of a shell on that bit of gilded gingerbread down yonder. London won't be any the less artistic for its destruction, certainly.

"Starboard bow gun, there!" he called down the tube, "let me see if you can send a shell into that thing standing down there in the park. I believe a couple of hundred thousand pounds of good money was spent on it. Just show me how much of the gilding you can knock off at a shot."

The *Vengeur* was brought to a standstill, and the gun carefully trained on its glittering mark. The shell struck with a flash and a roar and a cloud of smoke, and when the smoke cleared away the canopy was seen to shiver for a moment and then come down with a run, collapsing into a heap of ruins, from the midst of which half the gilded figure protruded.

"Bravo!" cried Max. "A capital shot! Now let us see if you can knock His Royal Highness's gilded head off."

It was no sooner said than done, for the second shell buried itself in the midst of the heap of ruins, exploded, and shot half the gilded figure bodily into the air.

"So much for that little bit of vainglory," said Max, "Now I think we'll drop a bomb or two into the Albert Hall and then go for more important game."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE END OF "DEATH TUESDAY."

A FEW minutes later, leaving the Albert Hall in flames behind her, the *Vengeur* winged her way towards the river at an elevation of three thousand feet. The land batteries, which had been firing at random up into the air over the City in the hope of crippling or blowing up the air-ship by a chance shot, were speedily silenced by the news of the destruction of the Albert Memorial and the Albert Hall in Kensington.

But meanwhile another battery had been got to work in Hyde Park near to the Magazine, and another one had been hurriedly mounted on the roof of the Knightsbridge Barracks. As soon as a glimpse was caught of the *Vengeur* floating above the clouds, every gun that could be brought to bear upon her was fired, but the elevation was nothing like great enough, and the shells whistled harmlessly beneath the air-ship and burst far away in front of her.

Max's knowledge of London was quite exact enough to tell him where they came from, and those at the batteries, to their disgust and disquiet, saw her swing slowly round and head back for the Park. Then the terrible mistake they had committed dawned upon them. The Anarchists had forgotten the powder magazine, and they had reminded them of it. Instantly there was a stampede, the guns were limbered up and hurried away across the Park, and every man got out of the magazine as fast as he could.

The air-ship, as everyone had expected, stationed herself exactly over the low, red brick building, and Max gave the order to try the direction with a fire-shell. It was let go, and struck the turf about twenty yards wide of the mark. A tall jet of brilliant flame burst up from the ground in the midst of a volume of smoke, and then fell to the earth, running in streams of fire over the turf. The second one struck the angle of the building, knocked the brickwork away, and enveloped the corner in flames. A third one struck the roof almost in the centre.

A long tongue of flame leapt upwards and then, with a roar and a shock that was heard and felt over half London, a couple of tons of powder and cartridges exploded, and from the midst of the quaking earth a vast volume of flame and smoke burst up as though it would rend the firmament itself.

Every window within a radius of a mile was shattered to fragments, and thousands of chimney-pots came clattering down over the roofs of the surrounding houses and smashed to fragments in the streets, killing and maiming hundreds of the panic-stricken wretches who were wandering aimlessly about wondering where the next blow would fall and whether they

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were more likely to be killed in the streets or burnt or crushed to death in the burning or falling houses.

The shock of the exploding magazine had barely passed away before the two bow guns of the *Vengeur* sent half-a-dozen shells each through the roof of the Knightsbridge Barracks, blowing the battery to fragments and scattering death and ruin within the building itself. This done, Max headed the air-ship a second time towards the river, which he crossed in the neighbourhood of Chelsea.

There was such a stampede as the law's delay had never known before.

As he looked down upon the little green garden in front of Cheyne Walk he said to himself with a sardonic smile :—

"Ah, my wise old sage of Chelsea, I wonder if it ever crossed your mind that such doings as these might one day be possible, and if so I wonder what string of vitriolic adjectives you would have ascribed to your humble admirer and sometime disciple, and yet I verily believe that in the inmost depths of your soul you would have found some excuse for the enemy of the Society whose cant and brutal stupidity you cursed so bitterly and so justly.

"I wonder what you would say now if you could see the terror and the panic of those swarming millions down yonder, with their miserable souls turning to water for fear of the man that they tried to hang like a dog in a corner. What's the good of all their wealth and their pride and their snobbery now? About as much good as it would be at the Day of Judgment; and yet, if they had only listened to you, and recognised the prophet when he was in their midst, it's just likely that there would have been no such thing as anarchy to-day, and therefore no *Vengeur* floating over burning London, and no Max Renault laughing at it.

"Well, well, I have that much respect for your memory that if ever I lay all London in ruins, as I may do some day, I'll take care that no shell falls in the spot that you made sacred in my eyes with your presence. I don't suppose you would take me for a disciple if you knew me, but I am one for all that, and after all, I don't suppose you ever understood the full application of your own doctrine.

"Good-bye, old sage! If your ghost is anywhere about it can come and watch me pay a visit to the National Palaver House that you once wanted cleared out with a regiment of soldiers. I'll clear it out a good deal more effectually than they could."

Thus soliloquising, Max steered the *Vengeur* at easy speed along the course of the Thames towards Westminster, still keeping his elevation of three thousand feet and sending an occasional shell from his guns at random over London to north and south, in sheer wantonness of destruction for the mere sake of keeping up the panic he had created. It was then nearly one o'clock, and according to the usual arrangements the Houses of Parliament would not be sitting for another hour or two, if, indeed, the members ventured within the precincts of Westminster at all.

By this time, the clouds had mostly drifted away to the eastward, and a warm April sun was shining down over the western half of the great city. In the City itself, the fires, kindled by the shells and bombs of the *Vengeur*, were still burning furiously, for the destruction of the fire-engines, and the panic which now reigned supreme among the terrified millions of London had stopped all organised effort to extinguish them, and so they raged on unchecked, spreading from house to house, and street to street, under the influence of the strong westerly breeze that was blowing. As the *Vengeur* passed over Westminster, Max caught sight of the square, red turreted building which he recognised as New Scotland Yard

"Ah," he said, looking down at it through his glasses. "I mustn't forget that. I'll let the national windmill alone for the present, for I may be able to catch some of the hereditary legislators and misrepresentatives of the Sovereign People in it a bit later on, but our friends of the police and the Criminal Investigation Department will probably be at home, and pretty busy too, so I'll just stop a minute and leave my card."

So saying, he stopped the air-ship high above the great square building, and then half-a-dozen fire-bombs descended on its roof in quick succession. They crashed through it as though it had been made of glass, and presently tongues of flame and wreaths of smoke began shooting and creeping out of the windows. As soon as he saw this, he ran half a mile to the southward and sent a dozen Anarchite shells through the windows to help on the conflagration that his fire-bombs had started.

"That'll do for you, my friends, I think. Scotland Yard was always a pretty warm corner, but I don't think it was ever quite as hot as it is now. There are a good many fellows in there who'll never hunt down any more poor devils of Anarchists and hand them over to the tender mercies of M. de Paris. Now where shall we pay the next call? Ah, of course, I have it. It would never do to forget that. We'll go and scare the rooks out of the legal dovecots.

"Those sleek-looking scoundrels, they're the cause of half the injustice and the oppression that has made Anarchy what it is, and me what I am. Here goes for the Temple and what the canting hypocrites are pleased to call the Royal Courts of Justice. I hope the Courts are sitting. I'll go and serve a

Sent bomb after bomb through the roofs of the House of Parliament.

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notice of ejectment on them and decline to stay execution, as they say in their pompous jargon."

With that he sent the *Vengeur* across the Embankment and the Strand, and placed her over the Law Courts. Then bomb after bomb crashed in quick succession through different parts of the gabled roof of the great building until it was on fire in a dozen places at once, and there was such a stampede and haste to get out as the law's delay had never known before. Judges in their wigs and ermine and scarlet; barristers, also bewigged, and with their long robes fluttering behind them, made one general rush for the doors, followed by plaintiffs and defendants, witnesses and jurymen, all breathless sharers in the universal panic.

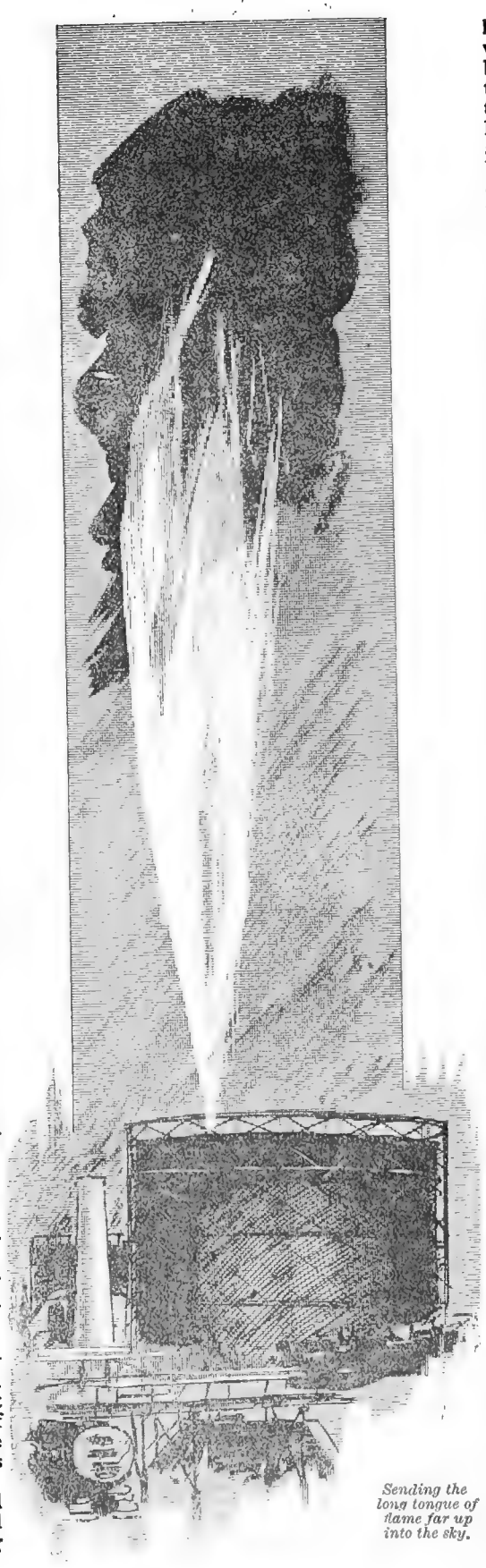
Max leant back in his seat in the conning-tower and uttered a shout of laughter, which was taken up throughout the ship as he and her crew saw the bewigged and berobed figures tumbling over each other in their hurry to escape from the burning building into the street.

The Strand, from St. Martin's Church to Temple Bar, was crowded in a few moments, and as soon as he saw this, he gave orders for a couple of the broadside Maxim guns to play upon it, and as the storm of bullets descended into the crowded space, the unhappy throngs were literally mown down in swathes, as corn falls before a reaping machine. Meanwhile a few shells were being sent from the bow guns into the different buildings of the Outer, Inner, and Middle Temple, and these of course had the immediate effect of sending barristers, lawyers, and clerks hurrying in crowds into the gardens, falling over each other down the staircases in their desperate haste to escape from the explosions which kept crashing through the building.

But no sooner had they reached the open air than the Maxims were turned on them and the hail of bullets struck them down by dozens. Then a few fire-bombs were dropped through the roofs: "Just to smoke the rest of the rats out," as Max put it to himself, and then a brief visit was paid to Lincoln's Inn with the same results reproduced on a smaller scale.

That afternoon and evening neither flag was hoisted nor light kindled on the clock tower of Westminster, for the universal panic had now spread to all ranks of society, and neither Lords nor Commons felt inclined to run the risk of a sitting in a building whose conspicuous position and character marked it out for almost certain destruction at the hands of the enemy of mankind who, for the time being, held London at his mercy.

Max waited in vain for the signal that Parliament was sitting, still keeping up the terrorism by circling



Sending the long tongue of flame far up into the sky.

hither and thither high over the vast wilderness of houses, and dropping a bomb or sending a shell here and there as the fancy took him, or any tempting object presented itself. He kept this up until about six o'clock, and then, as his ammunition was beginning to run rather low, he decided to put the finishing touches to his horrible work, and then get away and join Hartog again.

Going to work with almost diabolical deliberation, he first ran up and down over the river and destroyed the floating fire engines. Then, hovering over Westminster, he sent bomb after bomb through the roofs of the Houses of Parliament, the Government Offices, the Horse Guards, the Admiralty, and Whitehall. For a moment the thought of destroying Westminster Abbey as well crossed his mind, but a glance at the venerable pile brought back to his well-stored mind all its ancient and splendid traditions, and instead of giving the order he said to himself:

"No, I won't do that. It would do no good, and it would take a thousand years to repair the damage. I'll let the old church alone. Who knows but some day we may preach the new Gospel of Man in it. *Sacré diable*, how the abodes of red tape are burning! It seems to make splendid fuel. I wonder what there is in that fire-mixture of Hartog's? It burns as if it came from the lake of Tophet itself. Fine bonfires those for anarchy to light its pipe at! Ah, they're lighting the street-lamps out yonder to the north. It's time to go and pay the gasworks a visit. I think I've provided London with quite light enough for to-night. It's a waste to burn gas under the circumstances."

Then the *Vengeur* ran across to Vauxhall, and a few moments later the shells began bursting among the gas-holders, tearing great ragged holes in them, and as the gas came rushing out fire-bombs were dropped to ignite it, and huge tongues of roaring flame shot up into the air, until one after another the gasometers burst like huge shells. Then came the turn of the Old Kent Road works, and the southern half of London shook to its foundation as the enormous quantities of gas stored up in the holders took fire and then blew up, hurling fragments of iron plate, bricks and coal, and fragments of human bodies far and wide over the surrounding streets.

Every gas light in South London went out within a few minutes, and then the *Vengeur* headed away north-westward to the works of the Gas Light and Coke Company at Kensal Town. The great "Jumbo," the largest gas-holder in the world, was full, and the huge iron reservoir had been raised to the tops of the iron pillars with which it was surrounded.

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Max turned his attention to the smaller ones first, and sent a shell through the roof of each of them in rapid succession. Then he poised the air-ship exactly above the giant and dropped first a solid piece of iron weighing about ten pounds on to its roof and then sent a fire-bomb immediately after this. The piece of iron bored a clean hole, and as the gas came rushing up out of this the fire-bomb fell and ignited it.

The next instant a long stream of intensely brilliant flame almost like the ray of a search-light leapt up into the darkening sky hundreds of feet above the gas-holder. Then the volumes of gas escaping from the others caught fire in the air, with which, of course, they made a highly explosive mixture, and exploded with a concussion, the force of which was felt even by the *Vengeur*, floating nearly three thousand feet above. The great reservoir soon began to subside; its enormous weight driving the gas out with terrific force, sending the long tongue of flame far up into the sky, and casting a parting gleam on the hull and aeroplanes of the *Vengeur* as she soared away to the westward.

"Ah," said Max, as he looked back out of the conning-tower at the dark gulf of London, still lighted up by huge patches of flame covered by enormous canopies of rolling smoke, "the next time you try to hang an Anarchist, perhaps you will think twice about it. I hope that will teach you that the centre of power has shifted. The rule of nations is at an end, for I can paralyse those who rule them with a single stroke. What I have done to London to-day it would have taken a beseiging army weeks to do. The rule of the world has shifted from the earth to the air, and woe betide the earth as long as I rule the air! How mad Franz will be when he finds he has missed all this fun!"

So saying, he sent a signal for full speed to the engine-room, and in few minutes the conflagrations of London were only little points of light on the horizon.

(To be continued.)

WAS IT WRONG?

ONE fine summer evening I met on the boulevard one of my friends who had made his own way up in the world, and who, in his upward progress, had encountered so many different kinds of men that he had learned to take everything quietly, but who had retained for the enjoyment of his friends all his original freshness and goodness of heart.

We were chatting on our usual topics when a man of middle age, having his button-hole adorned with the ribbon of some foreign order, stopped in front of us, and, putting out his hand to my friend, who, not seeming to notice this, raised his hand quickly to his hat, said in a tone of voice that seemed to me somewhat ironical:

"What! what! Always happy? Yes, yes. Well, well, so much the better. Good-bye."

"Who is this gentleman?" said I, when we were some steps away.

"What, don't you know him? Then I'll tell you his history. In fact, he will furnish for us a practical illustration of the question we have been discussing. Is he a swindler or is he a genius? You shall decide the question for yourself.

"I made his acquaintance in 1878. He was then employed in a large commercial house. He was rather a remarkable orator in the clubs. Property, capital, bequests, had no more ferocious or more eloquent adversary than he. Every evening he turned all social questions inside out like a glove, amid the applause of the disappointed, the envious, and the sluggards who formed the mass of his audiences.

"In 1882 he thought it prudent to take a change of air, and took refuge in London to wait for events. As time went on his resources were exhausted, and he was obliged to take his watch to a pawnbroker. It was a gold watch, and he noticed that the man, after a quick, keen look at it, tried the knob with an acid, and immediately gave him the money that he asked for and his ticket. This method of testing the gold watch set him thinking. Having found the means of redeeming his watch. He took it to another office. There was the same quick look and the same mode of testing. He saw that this was the custom.

"Just at this time an old aunt, who had brought him up, died, and left him 15,000 francs. Then this ferocious enemy of all property and all bequests hastened to turn his inheritance into cash, and has known how to make it so fruitful that he has an income of 10,000 francs, a country villa, has bought that foreign order, the ribbon, which you saw at his button-hole, and lives comfortably with all sorts of small enjoyments."

"Did he make his fortune in trade?"

"No."

"In manufactures?"

"No. It was a plan of his own. Taking with him a sufficient sum of money, he went to Geneva, and, entering a watch factory, ordered two hundred watches of a certain pattern. The cases were to be of copper, heavily gilt, but the knobs of pure gold. Taking these with him to London, he pawned these two hundred watches in a few days to different pawnbrokers. All were tested at the knob. They cost him 40 francs each. The pawnbrokers advanced him 70 francs on each. So you see the affair paid very well."

"Certainly; but then he is a swindler."

"You think so?"

"And you also, I have no doubt."

"Well, perhaps. In the first place, his plan has never been found out, and he was able to realise a fortune from it; in fact, he could have carried it on up to the present moment without any inconvenience, but his tastes are simple, and he is naturally indolent, so that when he had enough he retired modestly, and thus left room for others."

"But the pawnbrokers must have suffered considerably."

"No. They did not lose one penny, for all these watches were withdrawn within the time allowed, and the money advanced on each of them was repaid."

"How long did he continue this business?"

"For five years."

"And he was never refused?"

"Never. To pawn one watch, ten watches, a hundred watches in London, is a very simple operation; but to pawn thousands of them for five years, to gain thirty francs on each one, and to cause them to be redeemed each one regularly by the payment of the sum advanced on each, that is the miracle—that is the stroke of genius."

"That must have been very difficult."

"Not at all. It was as simple as the egg of Columbus. This was his plan. When the weather was clear and the pavements dry, he walked quietly about through different streets and squares, dropping from time to time one of his pawn-tickets. When he had thus emptied his pockets, he went home with a clear conscience. The next day all these watches were redeemed by those who had picked up the pawn-tickets, and he could recommence his operations without any difficulty."

"Why, then, did you decline to shake hands with him?"

"Well, I have not yet quite made up my mind whether he was not a swindler after all."

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MRS. GREGORY'S DIAMONDS.

"GEORGE GREGORY, Solicitor," was on the brass plate on the door, and everyone always called my employer George Gregory, because there were seven brothers of the name, all in the law, in London. I was Frank Forrest, aged twenty-two, and I was articled clerk to Mr. George Gregory. He was the best friend I ever had, and the best husband and father I ever knew. At home he had a good, merry little wife, and a dozen children, some of them so exactly alike that strangers could never tell them apart. I would have worked very hard for Mr. Gregory, and have sacrificed my best gloves for the children, but I would have died outright for Mrs. Gregory.

George Gregory was well off, and his business was rapidly increasing, but Mrs. Gregory dressed plainly of her own choice, as she so often told me. It was not more than twice a year that she fastened in her ears, and at her throat, the diamond rings and pin which were all her little fortune when George Gregory married her. They were not very valuable and the setting was old-fashioned; but they were, after all, actually diamonds and solid gold, and very precious to the owner.

"I wore them on my wedding-day," she used to say, "and if ever I have a girl"—Mrs. Gregory's tribe were all boys—"she shall wear them on hers."

The rings were pendants—the shape of the setting, in outline, very like some drawings of Egyptian vases which I have seen. In each were five diamonds. The pin had but four; the central diamond had been lost and a pearl set in its stead.

Mrs. Gregory kept them in a purple leathern casket, shaped like a knapsack. She was fond of opening this to give the children a peep at her treasure. It gave her unqualified gratification; but somehow, believe me or not as you choose, they always made my blood run cold.

Still, I had no presentiments whatever, when, one bright August day, Mrs. George Gregory announced the fact that she was about to take the children into the country.

"They want fresh air," she said, "and I've found the nicest place. Only I hate so to leave George alone. You'll look after him a little, won't you, Frank?"

And I promised faithfully. That afternoon Mrs. Gregory started for Loughfield, stopping at the office to put her diamonds in the safe. Mr. Gregory went with his wife to the station, and returned looking a little blue, I thought. That night he slept on a lounge in the office and announced his intention of doing so, and of taking his meals at a restaurant, until his wife's return.

I copied his example as to meals, but I slept in my usual place; there was no accommodation for me at the office. And so we kept on for a week and a half, quietly and regularly, nothing happening in particular, except that Mr. Gregory negotiated for a certain piece of property which he had had in his eye for a long time, and which Mrs. Gregory thought the finest in the suburbs.

It was to be a surprise to her on her coming home. And one afternoon, all else being settled, Mr. Gregory went to the bank and drew thence the money which he was to pay to the present owner. Something stood on mortgage, I forget what; but the cash was £3,000. At ten next day it was to be paid over. I saw Mr. Gregory count it, and lock it up in his safe before he went to tea, and thought, I remember very well, that I should like to have so much money. I was spending it, in imagination, when the office door opened and a woman came in; a very pretty woman, all I could see of her face for her veil. She had yellow curls, and black eyes, and bright cheeks, and a very pretty chin, with a dimple in it. She was dressed in black, with a good deal of lace about her.

She came close to me and looked down into my eyes, and smiled, and said, "Will Mr. Gregory be in again to-night, do you think?"

I told her that he would be in soon, I supposed, and offered her a chair, which she took with another smile. Then she looked skyward through the window, and remarked that it wa raining.

"It will rain all night, I'm sure," she said. "How foolish of me to walk! I'm so delicate that a soaking would be my death. If you would only do me a favour—a great one to ask of a stranger; but—you will, I know."

"If it is possible," I remarked.

"If you would only go to No. 40, Avenue Place, and ask them to send Mrs. Contille's carriage," she said. "You can ride back in it, you know. It's impertinent of me to ask it but I'm an old friend of Mrs. Gregory, and you'll oblige me, I know."

I thought the lady rather cool, I confess, and I thought, too, of what Mr. Gregory would say. But the lady seemed to read my thoughts, and settled the question by saying, "I'll mind the office and explain to Mr. Gregory," and once more gave me a smile. That smile settled the affair.

I seized my hat and departed. The shower was almost over already, and I laughed to myself at the lady's fears of a wetting; but I made my way to Avenue Place at once. The way was easy enough to find, but I searched for the number in vain. I stood at the corner in perplexity, when a rough, unpleasant-looking fellow put a hand upon my shoulder and cried, "Hallo who are you lookin' for?"

"Mrs. Contille's house," I said. "No. 40, Avenue Place."

"Ain't no No. 40," he said. "You mistook—it's 30. I'm he coachman. What's the matter?"

"She wants you and her carriage," I said shortly, "at Mr. George Gregory's."

"Yes," said the man, "she's always wanting something. Ladies always are, sir. I'll have the carriage out in no time. You ride back in her."

I had not had my tea yet, and time was of importance. "I'll go with you," I said. He became more polite still.

"She's a lady that has as fine a stable as any lady I know," he said. "I can see by your eye that you are a judge of horses. You take a look at them. This way, sir, if you please."

This, as it appeared to me, was a high compliment. I nodded and followed the man. He led the way down an alley to a building of some sort and opened the door.

"After you, sir," he said.

I took a step forward; felt rude hands upon my shoulders; was flung forward some paces; heard a door locked, and was alone in a perfectly empty outbuilding. There, despite all my calls for aid, I remained until the dawn broke, when, by its light, I espied a loose board in the side of the building, pushed it away, and squeezed through it into some poor man's back-yard, where I made a dash straight through the passage, and so into the street.

Thence I sped, as fast as my feet would carry me, towards the office; but before I reached it I saw a sight which made my blood run cold. The street was full of people, half-dressed, and horror-stricken.

Policemen guarded the door. Something horrible had happened. I rushed forward. Those who knew me made way for me to pass; and I saw, stretched on his back, in a pool of blood in the middle of the office, Mr. George Gregory, as ghastly a spectacle as human eyes might ever rest on, cold and dead beyond a doubt; and, further on, the safe wide open, with its papers scattered on the floor. Then I fainted, or had a fit, and came into gaol.

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They set me free in a little while; perhaps no one ever really suspected me. The wretched widow, so broken down with woe that I hardly knew her, attested to my fidelity to her husband.

My story was told over and over again, and it seemed certain that the ruffian who locked me up in the stable was the murderer. But nothing was heard of him. He had made his escape in safety with £3,000, and the case containing Mrs. Gregory's diamonds.

I grew worn and ill with anxiety and trouble. And at last I could bear it no more, but bade them good-bye and left town. As I parted from Mrs. Gregory she put both her wan hands on my shoulders.

"I shan't live to see you again," she said, "but promise me that if ever you meet the man who killed my husband, you will do all you can to bring him to justice. Don't forget his face—don't forget his voice. Hang him, if you see him. Hang him, Frank Forrest, or I'll curse you!"

"I need no bidding to do that," I said. But she made me swear it on the Bible, and then kissed and blessed me as a mother might.

I went to America, and the gold fever fell upon me, and I worked for a fortune in the diggings for five good years. I had nothing to complain of as to luck; and, at last, with plenty of nuggets in my pockets, and health and heart enough for anything, I went up to San Francisco to enjoy myself.

Only one who had lived as I had for so many years can tell what pleasure it was to me to come into society again, to see the people at places of amusement, to talk with those to whom I became known. No man on earth is so ready to fall in love at first sight as one who has dwelt apart with his own sex for any length of time.

And I think that it would have been hard for anyone not to admire the Señora Maria. They said she was Spanish by birth, and her beautiful eyes were the eyes of sunny Spain. A man from "the diggings" is not apt to think too much of what will be said of him, or of what is said of other people. I never asked the Donna's antecedents.

I loved her, I wooed her, and I won her heart. Yes, I believed she loved me. I believe it now. She was a wild thing, reckless and passionate. No maiden nurtured in a peaceful home could have been what she was.

I also had grown wild and reckless. I think I loved her better for it.

We were to be married very soon. The world was now divided by that lover's rule—"Where she was and where she was not." We went to the theatre, where, in a blaze of light, her beauty drew all eyes towards her. I loaded her with presents; she gave me rich payment in that sweet promise that she should belong to me soon—should be mine at least for life. Once I said, "In Heaven also." Then she turned to me with a wild, strange gaze.

"Hush, Frank!" she said. "I don't want to think of death or of Heaven! I may not have absolution—I——Let this world suffice us!"

Our wedding-day was close at hand, when one day I called to see her. She was packing certain of her possessions in a little trunk. Warm as it was, a fire burnt on the hearth. Into it, as I entered, she was casting handfuls of flaxen hair, snipped from a curling wig which lay upon her lap. She gave a little scream as she saw me. Then she said, "Ah, I did not hear you, Frank! I am burning a relic of a masquerade ball, at which I made myself a blonde."

But she was so pale as she spoke that she frightened me.

"Are you ill?" I asked.

"The smell of burning hair has made me faint," she said.

"I will have no more of it," I cried. "Give the thing to a servant to make away with." And I rose to find her smelling salts. As I lifted it my eye lighted upon a little casket—a casket I had seen before, of tarnished purple velvet, shaped like a miniature knapsack. I seized it and tore it open. Within lay a pin and earrings, in outline like an old Egyptian vase, the central diamond of the pin replaced by a pearl; in three words—Mrs. Gregory's diamonds!

This is what I cried aloud. This is what she heard as she rushed towards me.

"Frank," she said; "Frank, what is it? Love, tell me!" And she shook like an aspen as she spoke.

I looked at the curled flaxen wig upon the ground. I looked at the beautiful dimple in the chin I had so often kissed, and I staggered back against the wall. I knew her now. I remembered her perfectly. She was the woman whom I had left in George Gregory's office on that awful day, six years before. She had come thither in disguise. For what?

"Señora Maria," I said, and my own voice sounded strange to me, "have you forgotten me? Do you remember the young man of whom you rid yourself in Mr. Gregory's office years ago, when you wore that wig, and——"

But she had thrown herself at my feet.

"Frank," she said, "Frank, my beloved! I never meant to kill him—only to open the safe. But he caught me at it. He seized upon me, and I used my knife. Frank, Frank, have mercy! I will go away. I—oh, Frank, remember that I love you!"

I remembered it too well. I was agonised. I was tortured.

But she had made confession, and I remembered my oath. I remembered the widow in her anguish. I remembered the children who were fatherless on that awful night. I remembered George Gregory lying in his blood upon the floor. It may be his avenging spirit gave me power to do what I did.

I opened the door. I passed down into the street.

There, by some strange chance, the first person I met was a detective from London, with whom I had a few days before talked over the mystery of George Gregory's murder.

I seized him by the arm.

"The woman who murdered George Gregory is in that room," I said. "I have every proof and her confession."

"Have you gone mad?" he asked. "That is Señora Maria's apartment!"

"Señora Maria is the murderess, and I shall be mad very soon," I replied; and there followed for me merciful darkness and oblivion as I sank senseless upon the ground.

She died. I cannot tell you more. They proved her guilt. Nay, she never strove to hide it.

She had been one of a gang of robbers. She had never been a good woman, or in any way a worthy one—vile from her childhood; so they proved her. But once I loved her. I have never forgotten that, or that she loved me. It haunts me as I wander through the gold land, careless of its gold, seeking only to shun the very sight of woman. It will haunt me through my life, until I lie down in some far solitude to die.

I shall never forget that I gave the only woman I ever loved to death, though she was that wretched creature—the lost, degraded murderess, Señora Maria!

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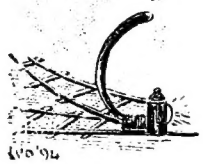
THE CROSSING,

A Story with two Morals



GLOOMY and dismal from dawn, the slight drizzle of the rain and the oppressive sultriness of the air seem to carry with them a pervading melancholy. Towards evening the wind begins to rise, the rain to descend more rapidly, until as I stand in my engine—I am taking out the express to-night—it looks as if it would increase to a heavy storm.

My thoughts have been anything but cheerful throughout the day, but now, seeming to grow with the violence of the storm, they begin to take on such forbidding shapes, that I start each time the wind surges against us.

I have been going over in memory the last few months of my life, the part which should have been the brightest and happiest.

I seem to see an old barn filled with merry-makers at a dance—but all fades to the dimmest memory, compared with the thought of one face. Shall I ever be able to forget her, I wonder? And yet it is not altogether her beauty, it is her winning manner that none can resist.

I became one of her lovers, the favoured one, and was at last accepted. How happy were those days, the sweet days of spring! The brilliant freshness of the foliage; the singing of the birds; the universal joy of nature chimed in so well with mine.

Then amidst the sunshine and the brightness came the person who was to throw such a shadow on my life. An artist spending the summer in the village, not working for fame but for amusement. A man of outwardly pleasing appearance, but one who lived entirely for himself. I don't know when or where he first met her. She never told me, always evading the question. He, it was easy to see, was attracted by her beauty.

I began to notice a change in her, almost imperceptible at first; but as time went on it increased until my presence seemed almost distasteful. She did not offer to break her engagement to me, and I was too selfish to release her of my own accord. Yet it was not altogether selfishness, for it was the only way to keep her from him. If she were to have been the gainer I could have borne it, but it was evident he meant her no good. What was a country girl to him? A passing amusement, nothing more.

I gaze back along the lighted platform. How misty are the faces of the hurrying throng! There is a father bidding his son good-bye, and, nearer me, a girl is bidding good-bye to her lover.

Would they part so easily if they knew how nearly mad I am? And yet what right have I to feel, when I am expected to be a part of the machine, to carry them to their destinations in safety?

I look ahead and try to calm myself. Before me is the obscurity of night, lit by the signal lanterns that look like the eyes of fiends.

A desire comes to me to see once more her father's cottage; it is only two stations beyond. To see the light in her window, to know that she is safe for at least one night. To-morrow I will unmask him. But even as I plan, the wind sobs against the cab, seeming to say, "Too late! too late!"

How long they are getting on the train! Will the starting signal ever come?

At last I see it. I open the throttle, and we start into the night. One thought has taken possession of me; I am speeding towards her, perhaps to save her, to gain her gratitude if not her love.

I increase the speed; under me the engine works like a thing of life, its feelings in sympathy with mine.

It hurls its fiery breath in the darkness with less and less intermission, while behind me I hear the heavy rumble of the train.

It soothes me to be thus speeding towards her on the wings of the wind, with all this life and power; surely I must be her protection.

As we enter the woods, and I lean out, the storm beats against me with increased fury, angry at our disregard for it; the trees fly by in dim, ghostly outlines, standing so spectral in the night that it is a relief to be out once more between the fields and meadows.

The first station is passed. Soon the line takes a long curve, and as we dash out upon it, going faster than we should, I gaze back for a moment at the train bending round it so gracefully. As I see the carriages containing so much life, my conscience smites me and I slacken the speed.

We pass farm after farm, the lights in their windows looking so cosy through the storm, that again I think what might have been; again the desire to see her home overmasters me. We are nearing it now; a long down grade, a crossing, and we shall be there. The wind, increasing in fury, beats against us, striving to beat us back and crying in a low whistling wail as it rushes past in the vain attempt. By the vivid flashes of lightning, I see the tall trees of the forest bend as if in torture beneath its fury, but we speed on under the jagged masses of cloud in the lowering darkness.

Almost unconsciously I open the throttle a little more. The engine hurls itself down the grade; it throbs and trembles under its mighty pulsations, straining every fibre like a thing of life to do its best, while behind me I hear the heavy rumble of the carriages.

There comes a flash of lightning so vivid that for a moment it is as day. What is that black object to the right so near the line ahead?

In a moment I have shut off steam, and with my hand on the vacuum brakes am trying to reduce our speed. The flare of the furnace falls upon the different objects passing with fearful rapidity; now a tree, a stump, then a boulder, at last it falls upon a whistling notice. The thunder, dying away, mutters hoarsely.

I turn the whistle cock and the shrill sound leaps into the night.

Suddenly I feel a great dread; ahead is the crossing; a moment more and the light falls upon it.

In a cart, directly across the line, the horse so frightened that it cannot move, she sits, and by her side sits the man who has come between us.

Clinging to him with mortal fear, her face set in its terror, she watches the approach of the iron monster of vengeance driven by the man she had so wronged.

I reverse the engine and put the brakes full on. The train fairly groans under the shock. I hear the grinding and pounding of the carriage wheels, but it is too late. The engine touches the cart and I hear a rending sound.

. . . . .

Never again shall I run a train; never again shall I look upon the rails; but even here, in this quiet place, I shall feel the rocking motion of an engine beneath my feet and live over again, as I have just now done, the night of her death.

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A POSITIVE REMEDY FOR CORPULENCE

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is a cheap issue (only 4d.) published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes:—"Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for, in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid:—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos—*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes:—'So far (six weeks from commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes:—'I am just half the size.' A fourth:—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes:—'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes:—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says:—'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says:—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

Should Stout Persons STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever, which was, perhaps, indirectly responsible for the untimely end, in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeed only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic troubles which will be difficult to overcome.

The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite is appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, takes a different course. He says, "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2 lb. to 12 lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr. Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning, but on the contrary he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get his book, the price of which is only 4d. It is entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pp., and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It can be had direct, or through any bookseller.—Extract from *The Million.*

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DOMES, BUBBLES, AND EGGSHELLS.

SEEN from a distance on a fine day the dome of St. Paul's looks as light as a soap bubble; and if it could talk, it would tell you it feels as light, for the mighty strength of the great church carries it as a man carries a baby on his shoulder. Yet it weighs—how much, do you fancy?

A woman stood in the doorway awaiting the return of her husband. He had left home with a heavy load of anxiety on his mind. Presently she saw him coming. Matters had been satisfactorily adjusted; she knew it by his face. Walking quickly up to her, he said—not loudly, but gently, with pauses between his words: "*Wife,-if-you-should-heap-a-bushel-of-eggs-in-that-door-I-feel-I-could-run-over-them-and-not-break-one.*"

This is in the line of universal experience. Weight—so far as it concerns the human body at least—is not determined by the scales, but by sensation.

We beg to introduce Mr. John Stafford, who says, "*I felt as if a heavy load had been lifted off me.*"

"For over twenty years," he adds, "I had suffered from obstinate indigestion and constipation. For more than a week at a time I would never have my bowels moved."

The reader is an intelligent person, doubtless. Consider Mr. Stafford's statement, then, for a moment; let us put the fact in plain English. His intestines were full of festering rottenness; they were like a stagnant morass, breeding disease and death. The poisons engendered by so vile an accumulation are absorbed by the tissues, pass into the blood, and infest every organ and part of the system. If not relieved, the victim will die—poisoned by the products of his own machinery. It is as horrible as the Black Hole of Calcutta, and common as weeds in a neglected garden.

We are, therefore, prepared to hear him say, "I always had a bad taste in the mouth, my tongue and teeth being covered with a sticky, slimy matter. I was constantly belching up foul gas or fluid that tasted sour as vinegar. After eating I had great pain and tightness in the chest, back, and between the shoulders, with a choking feeling in the throat. As time went on I grew weaker and weaker, through loss of appetite and lack of nourishment, until I could hardly follow my work. I tried all sorts of medicines I could hear tell of, but none of them did me any good.

"In June (1893) I was so run down and feeble I feared I should have to give up altogether. I was under a doctor for several weeks, but his medicines did me no good; I kept getting worse and worse. At last, in July of the same year, my mates at the Marsh Iron Works, where I was employed, told me about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and urged me to give it a trial. I got a bottle, and after I had taken it a few days *I felt a great improvement.* My bowels acted naturally, as they had not previously done for twenty years, my food agreed with me, and *I felt as if a heavy load had been lifted off me.* Continuing to take the Syrup, I gained strength rapidly, and have been in the best of health ever since. You will believe me when I say that I now recommend this remedy to everybody who suffers from the same complaint. You are welcome to publish my statement. Yours truly, (Signed) John Stafford, 15, Spa Terrace, Marsh Lane, Preston, October 11th, 1893."

Indigestion is primarily a disease of the stomach, and constipation is one of its results. On account of the torpidity of the liver (an accompaniment of indigestion), little or no bile is poured into the bowels, and the fluids of the intestines being dried up by the feverish action there, the partly digested stuff from the lower stomach becomes hard and solid in the lower bowel and clogs it. Then it putrefies, producing all the evils from which our friend suffered. Seigel's Syrup cured him by setting things right at the source of the trouble. We congratulate Mr. Stafford on his escape; it was narrow enough for the strongest and boldest.

The *scales* will tell him he weighs more than he has in twenty years; his *feelings* tell him that he could stand on an egg and not break it.

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